

PINTA: THE RANGOON CONTACTSUMMARY and ANALYSIS

This paper is in three parts: (1) A discussion of the main questions raised by the episode. (2) A brief description of the principal events in Rangoon. (3) A more detailed chronology based on cables, memoranda, etc. Parts 1 and 2 are based on the sources cited in Part 3.

1. Discussion

The U.S. entered the 37-day bombing pause on December 24, 1965, with few illusions that the communists would respond readily by entering negotiations. On December 10, Radio Hanoi denounced the May 1965 pause as "shameful trickery" amounting to "an ultimatum." It noted indications that another halt was in the offing and announced that the U.S. should "harbor no hope that the Vietnamese people would be taken in...." It demanded U.S. recognition of the DRV's 4 Points, a "definite" halt to the bombing and the "war of aggression" in SVN, etc. On December 16, Soviet Embassy Counsellor Zinchuk indicated to Bundy that Hanoi would almost certainly not respond at that time, though a pause could improve the atmosphere for the long run.

In spite of this, the U.S. made a maximum effort to draw the DRV into contact during the pause. A modicum of success was attained in Rangoon, where the DRV Consul General agreed to receive the U.S. Ambassador on December 29 and accept his Aide Memoire.

Timing: Contact While Bombing? No formal DRV reply was received until the evening of January 31, over 12 hours after the bombing had been resumed. The circumstances left unclear whether this timing was coincidental or a delay intended to avoid the appearance that the DRV agreed to the contact out of fear of the bombing. The ambiguity was so well contrived as to suggest that it was intentional. It did not provide a basis for claiming either that the DRV had gone back on its pledge never to talk while being bombed, or that the enticements of a pause in the bombing were sufficient to induce the DRV to enter contact.

A Stab at "Unconditional Discussions"? The DRV response turned out to be a rebuttal of the U.S. 14 Points. It objected particularly to U.S. troop withdrawal being offered on the condition, it claimed, that the NLF lay down its arms and accept amnesty. This meant keeping the "puppet government" and not recognizing the NLF as the sole genuine representative of the SVN people or negotiating with it. U.S. acceptance of the DRV 4 Points was again demanded. At the end, the DRV representative offered to listen to what the U.S. Ambassador "may wish to expound on the US position."

Perhaps this rather stilted beginning was intended as a small move toward unconditional discussions, since the DRV had taken some account of our 14 Points, presented its rebuttal and offered to hear our reply. The substance of the matter was not pursued, however. Instead our representative turned to arrangements, objecting to DRV contentions that its 4 Points should be the exclusive basis for exchanges and asking if "responsible emissaries of our two Governments could meet and talk about all of these things (the 4 Points and our 14 Points) together." This more formal arrangement was firmly rejected.

On February 1, Hanoi published a lengthy article containing essentially the same arguments as the confidential Aide Memoire. One new point was injected: Raising doubt about U.S. acceptance of neutrality for SE Asia, the article asks "is it not plain enough that... (the Americans) oppose the holding of an international conference guaranteeing the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia?" In fact, the U.S. had earlier urged such a conference in the hopes that Vietnam might be discussed by the way. Was this an involuted DRV probe of U.S. interest in resurrecting the Cambodian conference idea? It seems unnecessarily oblique, and the notion was not tested at the time.

The Channel Stays Open. The Rangoon channel was still open on February 3, when the U.S. delivered a note assuring the DRV that its Aide Memoire was under study.

Opposing Settlement Proposals. The substantive U.S. reply was delivered on February 19 in an Aide Memoire urging that the political future of SVN be settled through truly free elections, without any outside interference. The U.S. would accept the results of such an election, though it would not agree to put the NLF into a coalition government or take it as the sole representative of SVN without an election. U.S. forces would withdraw when peace was restored. The specific proposals passed to the DRV during the XYZ exchanges were offered again.

The issues separating the two sides are fairly clear. The communists demanded assurance of a major role for the NLF as the price for ending the war; and they feared that no such assurance would be valid while U.S. troops remained in Vietnam. The U.S. was unwilling to see such a role for the NLF imposed by force of arms; it wanted the war ended first. It would withdraw its troops only as the DRV withdrew and the NLF gave up the use of force as a means to political power. This would mean accepting the GVN, with such alterations as could be negotiated, as the legitimate government of SVN. In short, the communists were not willing to contend for power peacefully under GVN auspices, whereas we insisted they do so.

The Channel Closes. After accepting the Aide Memoire for transmittal to Hanoi, the DRV representative assailed as acts of war the bombing resumption and the USC/GVN Declaration of Honolulu. Acting under instructions, he then declined to continue the contact, citing the bombing resumption as the reason. Given his willingness to accept a U.S. message on February 3, however, and in view of the DRV's great emphasis on a role

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for the MLF and its rejection of the GVN, it seems possible that the Honolulu Declaration was as much responsible. Contrary to repeated communist demands, the Declaration must have read to them as a reaffirmation of U.S. recognition of the GVN as the "sole genuine representative of the SVN people."

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2. Principal Events in the Rangoon Contact

December 29, 1965. Byroade hands the DRV Consul General, Vu, an Aide-Memoire calling attention to the bombing suspension begun December 24, and expressing the hope that DRV reciprocity would permit it to be extended.

January 4, 1966. The DRV Foreign Ministry issues a blast at "so-called peace efforts" of the US. The statement does not explicitly acknowledge that the bombing has stopped. It objects to numerous other US activities. Its main point is that "a political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be envisaged only when the USG has accepted the 4-Point stand of the DRV, has proved this by actual deeds, has stopped unconditionally and for good its air raids and all other acts of war against the DRV."

January 21, 1966. Byroade calls on Vu to remind him we await a reply to our Aide-Memoire. Vu says he has no instructions yet, but offers his "personal" view that the Aide-Memoire amounted to an ultimatum. He uses the occasion to protest press reports from the White House hinting at their direct contact.

January 24, 1966. Vu sends Byroade a hand-carried Aide-Memoire dated January 21, and repeating, virtually verbatim, Vu's oral remarks of that date.

January 27, 1966. Byroade responds to Vu's January 24 Aide-Memoire with a memo inquiring about a response to his December 29 Aide-Memoire.

January 31, 1966. Some hours (at least 6) after the resumption of air strikes against the DRV, Vu asks Byroade to call. When they meet (more than 12 hours after the resumption), Vu delivers an Aide-Memoire referring to the DRV Foreign Ministry statement of January 4 and adding specific rebuttals of the US 14 Points: (a) the 14 Points and subsequent US statements constitute a refusal to recognize the principles of the 1954 Geneva Accords; (b) the US offers to withdraw its troops from SVN only on its own terms, which means that it really refuses to withdraw them; (c) the US statement that it seeks no military bases in SE Asia is inconsistent with its reiterated commitment to SEATO; and (d) the US demands that the NLF lay down its arms and accept amnesty as a condition for self-determination of the SVN people, which means the US intends to keep the "puppet regime" in power, does not recognize the NLF as the sole genuine representative of the entire SVN people, and will not negotiate with the NLF -- the US rejects Point 3, which amounts to rejecting all 4 Points.

The Aide-Memoire concludes by expressing Vu's willingness to listen to what Byroade "may wish to expound on the US position." Byroade

replies by objecting to the 4 Points as an exclusive basis for US/DRV exchanges and asks if "responsible emissaries of our two Governments could meet and talk about all of these things (the 4 Points and our 14 Points) together." Vu says there is no possibility of negotiations unless we accept their 4 Points. However, he also offers to communicate to Hanoi whatever Byroade has to say at any time, and shows Byroade out by a back gate which is indicated as better to use from a security point of view.

February 1, 1966. Hanoi's English service broadcasts a lengthy article from the Vietnam Courier (published only in French and English), listing the US 14 Points and rebutting them with essentially the same arguments used in Vu's January 31 Aide-Memoire. In elaborating on objections to SEATO, it calls the US a "sworn enemy of neutral countries" asking in substantiation "is it not plain enough that...(the Americans) oppose the holding of an international conference guaranteeing the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia?"

February 3, 1966. Byroade delivers a brief memo saying Vu's January 31 Aide-Memoire is under study in Washington. The purpose is to see if Hanoi is willing to maintain the contact, in spite of the bombing resumption.

Meanwhile Bundy, in Washington, concludes that "there appears to be a substantial possibility...that Hanoi even waited till it knew of the resumption before it dispatched (Vu's) instructions...Hanoi may have been unwilling to open any dialogue during the suspension, lest this appear as a sign of weakness." He notes that Hanoi had enough time to call Vu off by a commercial cable simply saying not to carry out prior instructions.

February 16, 1966. State sends Byroade an Aide-Memoire to be handed Vu, without the appearance of urgency. It responds to Vu's January 31 Aide-Memoire, as follows: (a) The US believes the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Accords are an adequate basis for peace in SE Asia. (b) The US is willing to withdraw its troops from SVN when peace is restored. It does not demand to be the sole judge of this condition. DRV violation of the regroupment provisions of the 1954 Accords has made US actions necessary. US withdrawal under international verification would be undertaken in the light of DRV actions in this regard. (c) The US desires neither military bases nor forces in SVN. (d) The DRV's Point 3 would be acceptable if it means only seeking "to achieve independence, democracy, peace and neutrality in SVN and to advance toward peaceful reunification," as paraphrased January 29 by Ho. It would not be acceptable if it meant putting the NLF in a coalition government or accepting the NLF as "sole genuine representative" of the SVN people, prior to and without regard to an election. The political future of SVN should be settled through truly free elections. The US is categorically prepared to accept the results.

This statement of the US position is accompanied by a settlement proposal similar to that handed Mai Van Bo in XYZ (q.v.) Byroade is instructed not to amplify on the text, but to note Vu's comments.

February 19, 1966. Byroade delivers the text to Vu, who listens to his interpreter's reading of it, promises to transmit it to Hanoi, but does not comment on its contents. Vu then assails as acts of war the bombing resumption and the USG/GVN Declaration of Honolulu. Noting that he is acting under instructions, Vu says, "Since the US has resumed the bombing, I hold that it is inappropriate to continue our talks at your request."

February 21, 1966. Vu's oral remarks of February 19 are confirmed and elaborated in an Aide-Memoire dated February 19 but hand-carried to Byroade on February 21.

3. ChronologyDecember 10, 1965

U.S. PAUSE IN BOMBING OF DRV DECEIVES NO ONE

Hanoi VNA International Service in English 1706 GMT 10 December 1965--B

... in an attempt to hoodwink public opinion in the United States and the world and cover up their frenzied efforts to expand and escalate the war in both zones of Vietnam. U.S. President Johnson, State Secretary Dean Rusk and the U.S. delegate to the United Nations, Ambassador Goldberg have once again played their record of unconditional discussions. Worthy of note was that U.S. State Secretary Dean Rusk has been claiming noisily about a so-called second pause in the bombing raids in North Vietnam. At a press conference in the White House on 1 December 1965 he said, I am not now excluding a stop in the bombing as a step toward peace. He also recalled the so-called first pause in May this year and slanderously accused the DRV with not responding to this gesture of the United States. He even threatened that if North Vietnam did not respond the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam question would be delayed.

This trick of the U.S. state secretary is not novelty. It must be recalled that in May this year, Dean Rusk in the name of his government, already sent a message to a number of countries announcing a halt in the bombing of the DRV by U.S. aircraft for a week beginning on 12 May. Making black white, the message slanderously charged North Vietnam with aggression against South Vietnam and threatened that if the South Vietnamese people did not stop their self-deliberation fight, the United States would continue to bomb the north.

In its essence, the message was an ultimatum to the Vietnamese people, urging the South Vietnamese to abandon their patriotic struggle as a condition for a halt in the bombing of the DRV. The message itself has revealed that the unconditional discussion offer of Johnson is only a bid to make the Vietnamese people lay down arms and submit to their brute force of aggression.

This shameful trickery has failed miserably. Now the U.S. imperialists are having another try at it. . . .

It also must be pointed out that the U.S. imperialists' deeds never match with their words. In the period of the so-called suspension of the bombings over North Vietnam, from 12 to 17 May this year, U.S. aircraft and warships continued to encroach upon the airspace and territorial waters of the DRV for spying, provocative, and raiding activities. Two U.S. F-105 jetfighters were downed over Hanoi on 13 and 17 May, respectively. Meanwhile, the United States brought to South Vietnam (over 1,400) more combat troops

and the U.S.-puppets intensified both their ground and air raids against the population. On 14 May alone, U.S.-puppet aircraft flew 186 sorties.

. . . . L. Johnson himself did not hide the true intention of the United States when he declared at his ranch in Texas on 6 December: We will send as many men as necessary to Vietnam. Is it not sufficiently clear that the new decision to halt the bombing in North Vietnam is only a maneuver to prepare for further expansion of the war by the U.S. imperialists?

Let the U.S. imperialists harbor no hope that the Vietnamese people would be taken in by such a shopworn trick of theirs. The United States must declare its recognition of the four-point stand of the DRV and prove it by concrete acts. Concretely speaking they must stop definitely all bombing raids against the DRV, stop their war of aggression against South Vietnam, withdraw all US troops from South Vietnam and let the Vietnamese people decide themselves their own affairs. Only then can there be genuine peace in Vietnam. As pointed out by President Ho Chi Minh in his reply to questions by Uruguayan journalist Salomon Schwarz Alexandroaith, editor in chief of EL POPULAR, organ of the Uruguayan Communist Party, this stand is the only correct basis for a solution to the Vietnam problem since it conforms with the Geneva agreements, with the practical situation in Vietnam and with the national rights of the Vietnamese people.

December 17, 1965

NOTE TO THE SECRETARY:

(TOP SECRET--EYES ONLY)

Subject: Last Thoughts on the Pause Proposal

1. My recommendation would continue to be affirmative, but only if we give ourselves time for real understanding with the GVN, and we were determined to continue it at least for two weeks, not jumping back in at the first predictable counter-blast from Hanoi.

2. I lunched with Zinchuk of the Soviet Embassy yesterday and, for what it is worth, he seemed to be saying that Hanoi almost certainly would not respond this time, but that it would greatly improve the atmosphere for the long run. I got the impression that the Soviets have had recent talks in Hanoi, in which Hanoi has taken pretty much the line reflected in its propaganda broadcasts of December 10 and 11, virtually denouncing a second pause in advance unless we also do something major with respect to the South--which I take to imply the suspension of reinforcements. This I most emphatically do not feel we should do.

William P. Bundy

December 29, 1965

STATE 202 (to Ambassador RANGOON), S/Nodis, Flash, Sent 29 December 1965

EYES ONLY FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

1. President has decided that he wishes defer resumption of bombing for several more days. We are most anxious that word of this action be conveyed directly to DRV, although we are also naturally conveying message to key Communist governments that in touch with Hanoi.

2. Accordingly, you should convey aide memoire in text given below in some manner to DRV Ambassador Rangoon. ...

3. Text of aide memoire is as follows:

BEGIN TEXT:

"1. As you are no doubt aware, there has been no bombing in North Viet-Nam since December 24 although some reconnaissance flights have continued. No decision has been made regarding a resumption of bombings and unless there is a major provocation we would hope that the present stand-down, which is in its fifth day, could extend beyond New Year. If your government will now reciprocate by making a serious contribution toward peace, it would obviously have a favorable effect on the possibility of further extending the suspension.

"2. I and other members of my Embassy staff stand available at any time to receive any communication you may wish to address to me or to us."
END TEXT.

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

RANGOON 315 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate, sent 29 Dec 65; Rec'd 0715, 29 Dec 65

EYES ONLY FOR THE SECRETARY

REF: DEPTTEL 202; EMBTEL 311

I called upon DRV Consul General at 3 P.M. today. ...

Vu Huu Binh ... received me with slight smile and ready handshake. I told him I was grateful for opportunity to see him personally as my government wished me to convey message directly to him for transmittal

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to his government. I then handed him the aide memoire. He and his interpreter studied document together with interpreter translating parts thereof into Vietnamese..

After studying document Vu Huu Binh said he would transmit it to his government. . . . I thanked him and told him I planned to keep my visit to him and the subject thereof quite confidential. I had come in official U.S. Embassy car but not my own because it was conspicuous. He said that on his part he would also keep matter confidential.

I . . . would be available in Rangoon anytime of day or night if he should wish to see me. . . .

BYROADE

RANGOON 316 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate, Sent 29 Dec 65;
Rec'd 1334, 29 Dec 65

Eyes Only for the Secretary

Ref: DepTel 202

In an unprecedented evening meeting in the Foreign Office I saw U Thi Han and U Soe Tin together there tonight. . . .

I filled them in on the day's developments, going into substance along lines Deptel 201 only slightly and they did not ask substantive questions. They were obviously delighted that present effort was being made, and that direct contact had been made in Rangoon, and that I had sought to inform them promptly.

* U Soe Tin asked if I expected a direct reply. I said I had had personal experience with Far East Communists only of the Chinese variety but, based upon that, I doubted, though I hoped to contrary, that a direct reply would come. He said he thought this correct and that, if Hanoi did in fact decide upon affirmative response, it would be in actions and not in form of reply to us.

BYROADE

January 4, 1966

(Hanoi VNA International Service in English 1749Z 4 Jan 66)

"Statement by Spokesman of DRV Foreign Ministry on So-Called Peace Efforts
Made Recently by the United States"Text

Hanoi, 4 January--Follows the full text of the statement issued today by the spokesman of the DRV Foreign Ministry regarding the so-called peace efforts made recently by the United States:

Recently, the U.S. Government has started a large-scale deceptive peace campaign coupled with the trick of temporary suspension of air attacks on North Vietnam as a sign of good will. U.S. President Johnson has repeatedly stated that the United States is determined to exhaust every prospect for peace, and will search relentlessly for peace. The U.S. Government has sent envoys to approach foreign countries, and has put forward new peace proposals which are actually a mere repetition of old themes.

The fact is that in spite of repeated military and political defeats, the U.S. policy of aggression in Vietnam has remained unchanged. The United States has impudently sabotaged the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam which it had undertaken to respect. It still states shamelessly that it will keep its commitments with the puppet regime rigged up by itself in Saigon, and this with a view to clinging to South Vietnam and perpetuating the partition of Vietnam. It still refuses to recognize the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, the sole genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam, and the leader of their struggle against the U.S. imperialists' war of aggression. The United States still refuses to allow the people of South Vietnam to settle by themselves their own affairs in accordance with the program of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation.

Moreover, it is frantically using U.S. and puppet troops to burn down or destroy villages and crops, and massacre the people in South Vietnam and even arrogantly demanding that the people of South Vietnam lay down their arms and accept the rotten Saigon puppet regime. The United States still brazenly gives itself the right to launch air attacks on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, an independent and sovereign country. It talks about respecting the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam, yet it refuses to accept the four-point stand of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which is a concentrated expression of the essential military and political provisions of the said agreements. It is harping on the same string about unconditional discussions whose real purpose it is to carry out the plot of conducting negotiations from the position of strength, and attempting to force on the Vietnamese people acceptance of U.S. terms.

The U.S. authorities' talks about peace are in complete contradiction with their war schemes and acts. While making a noise about its peace efforts, the United States is making feverish preparations to double the U.S. military strength in South Vietnam. The third brigade of the U.S. 25th Division has just been brought in for an occupation of Pleiku. The United States has kept on using toxic chemicals as a means of warfare and has made public announcements to this effect. Its B-52 strategic planes continue to bomb densely populated areas. In North Vietnam, the United States has threatened to bomb the densely populated industrial areas of Hanoi and Haiphong. U.S. President Johnson has also threatened to take hard steps in Vietnam. Meanwhile, the United States has intensified its air attacks on the liberated areas in Laos and impudently authorized U.S. troops to intrude into central and southern Laos and into Cambodian territory, thus extending the war from South Vietnam to these two countries.

The facts have shown that every time the U.S. authorities want to intensify their aggressive war, they talk still more glibly about peace. The present U.S. peace efforts are also a mere attempt to appease public opinion at home and abroad, which is strongly opposing the U.S. policy of aggression in Vietnam. The United States wants to turn to account the world people's legitimate aspirations for peace in an attempt to call black white, to pose as a peace-lover, to slander the Vietnamese people, and thus to create a pretext for making new steps in implementation of its scheme to intensify and expand the war. But no matter what sophisms the U.S. authorities may resort to in their attempt to cover up their aggressive schemes, they can fool no one.

The United States is thousands of miles away from Vietnam. The Vietnamese people has never laid hands on the United States. The U.S. Government has no right to send troops to invade South Vietnam and to launch air attacks on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam any condition whatsoever in exchange for stopping its air raids on North Vietnam.

U.S. imperialist aggression is the deep root and the immediate cause of the serious situation now prevailing in Vietnam. With the ending of this aggression peace will be immediately restored in this country.

The Vietnamese people eagerly want peace for national construction, but they know full well that real independence must be achieved if genuine peace is to be secured. It is the unswerving stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to strictly respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam and to correctly implement their basic provisions as concretely expressed in the following points:

One--Reaffirmation of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people: peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. In accordance with the Geneva Agreements, the U.S.

Government must withdraw all U.S. troops, military personnel, and weapons of all kinds from South Vietnam, dismantle all U.S. military bases there, cancel its military alliance with South Vietnam. The U.S. Government must end its policy of intervention and aggression in South Vietnam. In accordance with the Geneva Agreements, the U.S. Government must stop its act of war against North Vietnam, cease all encroachments on the territory and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Two--Pending the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, while Vietnam is still temporarily divided into two zones, the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam must be strictly respected: The two zones must refrain from joining any military alliance with foreign countries, and there must be no foreign military base, troops, and military personnel on their respective territory.

Three--The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the people of South Vietnam themselves, in accordance with the program of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation without any foreign interference.

what has this mean?

Four--The peaceful reunification of Vietnam is to be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones, without any foreign interference.

A political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be envisaged only when the U.S. Government has accepted the four-point stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, has proved this by actual deeds, has stopped unconditionally and for good its air raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The just struggle and the unswerving good will of the Vietnamese people and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam have always enjoyed the sympathy and vigorous support of the peace-loving governments and people the world over. The Vietnamese people are very grateful for this sympathy and support. The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam calls on the governments and peoples of the Socialist countries, those of the Asian, African, and Latin American countries, and the peoples of the whole world, including the American people, to extend still more active support and assistance to the Vietnamese peoples' just patriotic struggle, and to oppose still more resolutely and vigorously all the U.S. imperialists' plans for intensified war as well as all their peace swindles.

So long as the U.S. imperialists still pursue the war of aggression against Vietnam, still use U.S. and satellite troops to invade South Vietnam, and launch air attacks on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the people in both zones of Vietnam, fearing no sacrifices, will resolutely carry the resistance war through to the end and fulfill their sacred duty of defending the sovereignty of the fatherland and the independence of the nation and contributing to the defense of world peace.

January 5, 1966

RANGOON 327 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Priority , Sent 5 Jan 66; Rec'd 2:27 A.M.,
5 Jan 66 (Passed to White House 5 Jan 66, 4:15 A.M.)

Eyes Only for the Secretary

1. . . .When I saw U Thi Han and Soe Tin as reported EmbTel 316 I asked them how fast they believed North Vietnamese communications were. (I was interested in whether Vu Huu Binh might have been able get Hanoi's authority to receive me.) Soe Tin said they would be quite slow unless they used Chinese facilities.

2. Last night Soe Tin told me Vu Huu Binh had transmitted my message to Hanoi. He said Vu had sent two other messages to Hanoi direct by commercial cable a few hours after I saw him. I find this interesting and encouraging, in that this would appear to indicate Vu communicated with Hanoi without informing Chinese Embassy here.

BYROADE

January 6, 1966

RANGOON 329 (to SecState), S/NODIS, Priority , Sent 6 Jan 66;
Rec'd 6:45 A.M., 6 Jan 66 (Passed to White House 6 Jan 66)

Eyes Only for the Secretary

Yugoslav Ambassador Drndic called on me at his request today and further reinforced my belief we are still in clear as far as secrecy of Rangoon operation is concerned.

. . . .He said, "I talked with Vu Huu Binh recently and he said he was confused because of non-receipt of instructions from Hanoi. Vu said that he had received guidance on the party line quickly during the last bombing pause, but that this time he hadn't had a word from Hanoi."

BYROADE

RANGOON 336 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Priority , Rec'd 8:53 P.M.,
Jan 11, 1966 (passed White House 11 Jan 66, 10 P.M.)

Eyes Only for the Secretary

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.....
Tonight at a diplomatic function the French Ambassador . . .

...said that the story was being circulated that I had seen the North Vietnamese Rep here and had given him a communication explaining the pause in bombing. . . .

.....
.....
...I believe that this information in the hands of a not very friendly French Ambassador, ~~plus the fact that the White House has announced a direct contact~~, will result in such speculation as to possibly preclude the use of Rangoon as a secret contact post in the future. . . .

BYROADE

January 20, 1966

STATE 227 (to Amembassy RANGOON), S/Nodis, Immediate, Sent 20 Jan 66

1. As part of our effort to close all circuits, you should seek appointment with DRV Consul General, saying simply that you are doing so under instructions.
2. Assuming he accepts, you should remind him that when you delivered our message on December 29 you indicated that you would be available for any response DRV might wish to make through this channel. Since that time, USG has received no indication of any Hanoi response either related to military action or obstacles to negotiation. Does DRV rep have any message to convey?
3. We suspect he will be without instructions and will simply undertake to report your call. However, if he should respond at all on your reference to military activity, you should indicate that VC activity in the South appears to have remained at a high level, and we have had reliable evidence of major truck movements continuing through Laos to South Vietnam. In circumstances, we have no alternative but to assume that DRV is continuing to send regular units to the South and to support high level of military activity there.

* If he should turn conversation in direction of conditions for negotiation, you should say that our position has been made clear many times and recently summarized in fourteen points and also in Goldberg letter to UN. We have had no indication of Hanoi's views on these documents, or on possibility of negotiation either without conditions or on basis of Geneva Accords.

HUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

January 21, 1966

RANGOON 365 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate, Sent Jan 21;
Rec'd Jan 21, 1966, 12:46 PM. (Passed White House Jan 21, 66)

Eyes Only for the Secretary

1. Called upon DRV Consul General Vu at his residence at 8:00 P.M. tonight. . . .

2. Vu did not wait for any introductory remarks on my part but remarked as soon as we were seated that I had delivered an aide memoire to him recently which I had said I would keep confidential. He said he had transmitted document to his government as he had promised. He wanted me to know however that in his own personal opinion the tone and contents of the aide memoire were such that he considered it an ultimatum.

4. I reminded him that when I last saw him I had said I would stand by for a reply from him. So far none had been received and there was no indication of any response either related to military action or to obstacles to negotiation. I asked if he had any reply for me. He said he had had no instructions from his government to reply. He said that in the meantime his government had issued public statements which indicated its position.

7. Vu said he had read press reports from the White House which hinted at our direct contact. I said I was aware of this statement but Rangoon had not been singled out. He said "such news should not have been disclosed, if you sincerely wish to exchange views." I said I understood and would do all I could to preserve secrecy our contacts.

9.

9. I made remark that I hoped I received a telephone call some day from him and was preparing to depart when he said he was ready to listen if I had anything more to say. I said I had no instructions to say more but would make one more comment. I said from Washington viewpoint it was obvious that VC initiated military activity in South Vietnam had remained at a high level. We also had reliable evidence of major truck movements continuing to South Vietnam through Laos. It seemed we had no alternative but to assume that DRV was continuing to support large scale military effort in South and send regular units there.

10. Vu said that we were now speaking informally he would comment. He said that immediately after the US made its 14 points public, 4000 US soldiers had landed in South Vietnam. He also mentioned the figure of 9000 more arrivals (but I never got period of time to which he referred). He said there are reports that 20,000 more South Koreans may come. This was ample proof that our President was not sincere.

11. I said we both had had military experience, and therefore we both knew the advance planning that had to go into major movements of military units. . . .

12. . . . Vu said out 14 points contained nothing really new. I said I hoped he would find it a useful summary of our views for study.

13. . . .

BYROADE

STATE 230 (to Amembassy RANGOON), S/NODIS, Immediate, Urtel 366,
Sent 21 January 67

1. Text of U Thant's press conference Jan 20 on point you raise reads as follows:

"QUESTION: Last week when the US note was passed to the Hanoi Government in Burma, were you personally instrumental in this?"

"ANSWER: No, I was not instrumental in such a reported transaction; but of course the US very kindly kept me informed of the steps it proposed to take."

2. While you are right in assuming Thant tends by inference to substantiate reporter's assumption that contact took place in Burma, this point was not pursued in his press conference, nor was it raised with Secretary in his press conference this morning.

3. If we are asked, we will continue for time being to take line that US is not prepared to comment on any specific channels of communications and suggest you do same.

NRe 4. Basis of question was probably earlier New York Times story about Monday which had mentioned Burma as place of US/DRV contact. Rangoon had also been mentioned in other press reports as possible point of contact. However, Times and other references were all low key and, thus far, neither they nor U Thant remark have attracted particular press attention.

RUSK (Drafted by W. B. Buffum, P. H. Kreisberg; Approved by W.P. Bundy and Walsh)

January 24, 1966

RANGOON 370 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate, Rec'd 7:36 A.M.
(passed to White House 9 A.M.)

Have just received an Aide-memoire addressed to me signed by DRV Rep Vu Huu Bing. Aide memoire is confusing in that it is dated January 21. Which is the date of my second meeting with him. Text follows:

Quote :At the last meeting, you handed to me an Aide-memoire which sounds in my personal views like an ultimatum. At your request, I have, however, transmitted it to my government and kept the contact in secret.

With regard to your Aide-memoire, I have no instruction from my government to give you an answer. Still I hope you have read the statements issued recently by my government.

Lately, the press has reported news quoting White House sources which hinted the contact between you and me.

Also personally, I have some other remarks to make: Immediately after the announcement of the 14 points by the United States, some 4,000 American soldiers were introduced into South Vietnam and were stationed in Pleiku and recently, additional US troops comprising 9,000 men have landed in South Vietnam and it is now reported that South Korea is preparing to send 20,000 soldiers to South Vietnam. All these facts prove that your president is not sincere yet in settling the Vietnam question in accordance with our position.

Though I do not intend discuss things now, I should like to point out that the US 14 points contain nothing new." Unquote.

It will be noted contents above quite similar to his remarks to me as reported Embtel 365. Letter containing Aide-memoire was obviously hand carried as there were no stamps or postmarks. It sounds as if it were written prior to our second meeting but it seems if so Vu would have mentioned his reply to me. Also if hand carried why a three day delay? I can only guess that it was written after our second meeting and post dated so we cannot take position there was no reply. We will endeavor to find out about this if we can.

BYROAD

January 26, 1966

STATE 241 (to Amembassy RANGOON), S/Nodis, Immediate, Sent 26 Jan 66, 9:36 A.M.

1. Kohler saw DRV Charge in Moscow on 24th and found latter with nothing new to say. However, DRV Charge concluded conversation by saying that if USG wished any contacts they should be in Rangoon.

2. Accordingly, you should send message to DRV Consul General saying simply that you remain available and asking whether he has any instructions. This could be in form of response to his aide memoire delivered January 24. . . .

THE SECRETARY (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

January 27, 1966

AMEMBASSY RANGOON 374 (to SecState); S/Nodis, Immediate, Rec'd 27 Jan 66, 12:34 A.M. (Passed White House 27 Jan 66)

Ref: DepTel 241

1. At 10:32 this morning the following memorandum addressed to Vu Huu Binh was handed to a representative of DRV Consulate General here.

2. Quote I received on January 24, 1966 your Aide-memoire dated January 21, 1966 and have transmitted its contents to my government.

3. I have noted in it your statement that you have no instructions from your government to give me an answer to my Aide-memoire of December 29, 1965, and I wish to inquire whether such is still the case. In this connection I wish to assure you again that I remain available at any time to receive any communication you may wish to address to me. Unquote.

BYROAD

January 31, 1966

RANGOON 389 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Flash , Sent 31 Jan 66; Rec'd 3:39 A.M., 31 Jan 66 (Passed to White House 3:55 A.M., 31 Jan 66)

Am seeing DRV Consul General Vu tonight at 7:30 P.M. at his rpt his request.

BYRCAGE

RANGOON 392 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate , Sent 31 Jan 66, Rec'd 31 Jan 66, 9:02 P.M. (Passed to White House 9:45 P.M. 31 Jan 66)

Text of Aide memoire referred to in Embtel 391 as follows:
Quote I am forwarding to you the statement attached herewith made by the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam dated January 4, 1966 regarding the so-called "Peace-efforts" made recently by the United States.

With regards to the 14 points and the subsequent statements of the United States Government I hold that the American authorities still refuse to recognise the fundamental national rights of the Vietnamese and people namely peace independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam as stipulated by the 1954 Geneva agreements of Vietnam.

The United States Government states that withdrawal of its troops from South Vietnam will be effected only under American terms, that means the United States refuses to withdraw its troops from South Vietnam.

The United States Government states that it seeks no military bases in South East Asian countries but on the other hand says it has to fulfil its commitments with the S.E.A.T.O. Bloc.

The United States Government says it respects the right to self-determination of the South Vietnamese people on condition that the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation lay down arms and be granted amnesty -- that means the United States tries to maintain a puppet regime in power countering the South Vietnamese people, does not recognize the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation as the sole genuine representative of the entire South Vietnamese people and will not engage in negotiations with the Front. The United States Government refuses to accept Point 3 of the 4-point stand of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, that amounts to American rejection of all the four points.

Concerning the 4-point stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. . I beg to quote the above-said statement of the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam: "A political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be envisaged only when the United States Government has accepted the 4-point stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, has proved this by actual deeds, has stopped unconditionally and for good its air raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

I am ready to listen to what the Ambassador may wish to expound on the United States position.

Rangoon dated January 31st 1966
Mr. Vu Huu Binh, Consul General of the D.R.V. UNQUOTE

BYROAD

RANGOON 394 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate, Sent 31 Jan;
Rec'd 31 Jan 66, 9:21 P.M. (Passed to White House 10:15 P.M., 31 Jan 66)

Interpreter for DRV representative Vu called early this afternoon to ask if I could meet with Vu at 7:30 PM tonight. I agreed and called on him then accompanied again by Leo Reddy.

His Aide memoire was still in the typewriter and we had a rather pleasant twenty minutes of small talk not touching on Vietnam. When document arrived he spoke at some length about his views on Vietnam situation. A close check with Reddy's notes indicates that he had practically memorized contents of Aide memoire and its contents should be accepted as accurate portrayal his remarks. He ended by asking if I had anything to say (along lines last sentence Aide memoire).

I said I would like to revert to our previous meeting and to his Aide memoire of January 21. The latter contained the following sentence "All of these facts prove that your President is not sincere yet in settling the Vietnam question in accordance with our position." He acknowledged his remembrance of this sentence.

I said I thought it expecting just too much that our President should be expected to be "sincere" in meeting "their" terms. They had their four points which were called "conditions." We had fourteen points which expressed what we believe. Was it not possible that responsible emissaries of our two Governments could meet and talk about all of these things together. All we asked was for unconditional talk or talks based upon the Geneva Agreements.

There was some confusion, based I believe on faulty interpretation, and at one point he apparently thought I had said something new as he said he would have to report to his government. On further clarification however his answer was quite clear and definite. He said there was no possibility for negotiations unless we accepted their 4 points. He said their position was the embodiment of the minimum of their national rights. If we proved our acceptance of the Geneva Agreements by actual deeds there could be a basis for a political settlement. If we rejected the Geneva Agreements, which embody their rights, there could be no negotiations. What was needed from our side was the acceptance of these points by actual deeds. There was a non-conclusive discussion as to just whom had violated the Geneva Agreements. He asked if I had anything else to say.

I said that I did because we had heard from Hanoi publicly many times that our President was not sincere, that his peace effort was a phony and that we were deceitful in the whole exercise. I wanted to raise the question as to just who was sincere and who was not. Hanoi kept repeating, even as late as yesterday, that there were no North Vietnamese regular troops or troop units in the South. Almost no one believed this. There were plenty of prisoners from these units to disprove this stand of Hanoi. Representatives of many nations in Saigon knew the facts, yet these statements continued. I could not understand this and wished his comments. Vu said he took note of my remarks and would communicate them, but would not comment otherwise.

I said that I was nothing new in the positions he had given me tonight but was glad to talk to him in at event. He said if we were not careful we could get into endless quarrels. I said that there would never be anything personal about our differences of opinion and we should keep it that way so that sometime we both could be useful to our governments. He said he would communicate at any time whatever I had to say. He showed me on the way out a back gate to his house which would be much better to use as an entrance from a security point of view.

While the above doesn't sound like it, this was our most friendly meeting to date. Vu was very cordial and hospitable and seemed in a relaxed mood. If he knew of news reports that bombing had been resumed he gave no indications of it.

BYROADE

February 1, 1966

MANCORN Immediate 396 (to SecState), S/Exdis, Rec'd Feb 1, 1966, 1:26 A.M.
(Passed to White House 1 Feb 66, 1:43 a.m.)

Ref: EMBTEL 394

In reviewing the bidding on last night's discussions I find a sentence in the notes of Mr. Reddy which concerns me. This sentence is as follows: Quote in fact, your government agreed when the Geneva Agreements were drawn up that you would not use force to protect them. Unquote. This remark, if it was in fact made with use of these words, would have come chronologically at a point near the end of para 5 in above ref tel where I reported that there was a non-conclusive discussion as to just whom had violated the Geneva Agreements.

It should be remembered that his discussion was through an interpreter. Our discussion at that point seemed to me at the time to be simply an exchange of statements as to which side had used force to violate the Geneva Agreements. On the other hand the statement in Reddy's notes says something quite different. It could imply that DRV in attacking South Vietnam though it would be secure against US military action, and that we were not playing the rules of the game as we had previously said we would not use force in such a situation.

BYROAD

Hanoi VNA International Service in English 1737Z 1 Feb 66.

"Johnson Puts Everything in the Basket of Peace Except Peace

Text

Hanoi--Following is an article by Quang Loi in Vietnam Courier, a Hanoi fortnightly published in English and French, playing Johnson's deceitful search for peace campaign:

On 23 December 1965, Dean Rusk, in an interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Company, expounded American views on a settlement of the Vietnam problem. On 3 January 1966, the White House issued a communique entitled "The Heart of the Vietnam Problem." On 5 January 1966 Goldberg, U.S. Representative to

the United Nations, sent U Thant a letter in which he reaffirmed his government's desire for a negotiated solution to the Vietnam problem.

With perfect synchronization, on 24 December 1965, the Pentagon ordered a temporary suspension of the criminal bombings against the DRV.

Since then, six emissaries sent by U.S. President Johnson have traveled the length and breadth of the five continents: Goldberg to The Vatican and Western Europe; Harriman to Poland, India, Pakistan, the UAR, some Asian countries, and Australia; Williams to Africa; Humphrey to the Far East; Bundy to Canada; and Thomas Mann to Mexico....

Never has the United States engaged in a diplomatic campaign on such a scale. It has, indeed, good reasons for doing so!

The Heart of the Vietnam Problem

The existence of the Vietnam problem is an undeniable fact. The presence in South Vietnam of a 200,000-strong U.S. expeditionary corps is another undeniable fact.

A constant preoccupation of the Washington rulers is how to justify American armed intervention in Vietnam. For this would allow them to explain to public opinion why there have been retaliations against the DRV.

This time, having found nothing better, the White House simply harked back to its old quibble: the South Vietnamese people's struggle against American interventionist troops is aggression from North Vietnam: it is this aggression from the outside which has resulted in the presence of U.S. troops. After affirming that it would be difficult to count U.S. and other countries' peace initiatives, the White House had made public U.S. contribution to the basket of peace:

1--The Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 are an adequate basis for peace in Southeast Asia.

2--We would welcome a conference on Southeast Asia or on any part thereof.

3--We would welcome negotiations without preconditions, as the 17 nations put it.

4--We would welcome unconditional discussions, as President Johnson put it.

5--A cessation of hostilities could be the first order of business at a conference or could be the subject of preliminary discussions.

6--Hanoi's four points could be discussed along with other points which others might wish to propose.

7--We want no U.S. bases in Southeast Asia.

8--We do not desire to retain U.S. troops in South Vietnam after peace is assured.

9--We support free elections in South Vietnam to give the South Vietnamese a government of their own choice.

10--The question of reunification of Vietnam should be determined by the Vietnamese through their own free decision.

11--The countries of Southeast Asia can be nonaligned or neutral if that be their opinion.

12--We could much prefer to use our resources for the economic reconstruction of Southeast Asia than in war. If there is peace, North Vietnam could participate in a regional effort to which he would be prepared to contribute at least 1 billion dollars.

13--The President has said: The VietCong would not have difficulty being represented and having their views represented if for a moment Hanoi decides who (as received) wanted to cease aggression. I do not think that would be an insurmountable problem.

14--We have said publicly and privately that we could stop the bombing of North Vietnam as a step toward peace although there has not been the slightest hint or suggestion from the other side as to what they would do if the bombing stopped.

We have deemed it useful to reprint in full the White House's 14 points so that our readers can judge them in all objectivity.

Where Does the Heart of the Matter Lie?

If one was to believe the White House, U.S. armed intervention would be legal for the thing for the United States is to keep its commitments to South Vietnam.

But the real commitments of the United States are completely different. Everyone knows that the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam have recognized the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Vietnam, and clearly stipulate that all participants in the 1954 Geneva Conference should abstain from interference in Vietnam's internal affairs. In the name of the U.S. Government, Edell Smith, head of the American Delegation, declared at that conference that his government undertook to refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb the execution of these Accords.

From the jurisdictional and political point of view, only that solemn commitment counts. It was taken at the final session of the Geneva Conference, and the U.S. Government must fully respect it.

However, the American imperialists have completely ignored it. They have been interfering ever more seriously in South Vietnam. They have brought to power a whole series of agents in their service. Through a system of advisors and aid, they have set up a neocolonialist regime and sabotaged the reunification of Vietnam, which was scheduled for 1956. They have covered South Vietnam with a network of military bases and suppressed all aspirations to peace and national reunification with Fascist measures taken by a most tyrannical regime. Even if U.S. commitments to the pro-American puppet administration did exist, they would not be valid simply for lack of a legal basis.

It is the American imperialists' policy of intervention and aggression that is the deep cause of the serious situation in South Vietnam. The people of South Vietnam have been forced to fight in self-defense to preserve their sacred national rights and their right to live. The struggle they have been waging is just and conforms to the spirit and letter of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam. This accounts for the growing approval and support of the world's people, including the American people, for the Vietnamese people.

On the contrary, all the efforts made by U.S. strategists to justify themselves before the American people and before history have come to grief. One remembers the White Paper issued by the State Department at the end of 1961 when the special war was launched, the Green Paper which followed it, and the second White Paper, "Why Vietnam?", published at the time when U.S. troops were being massively sent to South Vietnam. One remembers the tireless declarations made by the White House, and by U.S. President Johnson himself, and the innumerable trips undertaken by U.S. emissaries to almost all countries of the world. All this has ended in utter failure; never have the U.S. rulers experienced such serious political isolation. Everywhere, peace-loving people have strongly condemned American aggression in South Vietnam and the aerial bombings against the DRV. The publication of "The Heart of the Vietnam Problem" shows that Washington's efforts, although considerable, have failed to falsify the truth and to whitewash the American aggressors.

The 14 Points--A Barefaced Lie

In its new document, the White House mentions a few things which it has so far more or less evaded: respect for the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Agreements, U.S. intention not to set up any military bases in Southeast Asia and not to maintain troops in South Vietnam,

freedom for the South Vietnamese people to choose their own government and for the Vietnamese people as a whole to decide on the reunification of Vietnam, and so forth.

The Johnson Administration has made those so-called concessions to make believe that the United States has renounced its aggression in Vietnam and accepted the four-point stand of the DRV, except the third point. But this American bluff is not so shrewd as it seemed at first.

The White House affirms that the United States does not desire to retain U.S. troops in South Vietnam after peace is assured. But peace in South Vietnam has been wrecked by the sending of an American expeditionary corps for direct aggression. As long as this latter remains in South Vietnam, how can peace be restored and assured? To say that the withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam will be effected only when peace is assured means to refuse to withdraw them until the Vietnamese people bow before American aggression.

The White House affirms that the United States wants no U.S. bases in Southeast Asia and that the countries of Southeast Asia can be nonaligned or neutral if that be their option. But in the introduction to the 14 points, it makes it clear that American commitments are based on, among other things, the SEATO Treaty. As SEATO is directed against the security of Southeast Asian countries, among them Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam, how can respect for the neutrality or nonalignment of Southeast Asian countries be compatible with American attachment to the objectives of SEATO? At bottom, the American imperialists remain the sworn enemy of neutral countries. It is not plain enough that they have never ceased to sabotage the neutrality of Laos and oppose the holding of an international conference guaranteeing the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia? Did not Dean Rusk himself declare to the CBC on 23 December 1965 that South Vietnam's neutrality might be realized after the Viet Cong have laid down their arms and accepted the amnesty? In the American conception, neutrality is but a camouflage for neocolonialism.

The White House affirms that the United States respects the South Vietnam people's freedom of self-determination and right to choose their own government through free elections. How can free elections be held when the country still remains under the control of American troops and when the United States wants, as Dean Rusk has admitted, the capitulation of the South Vietnamese people? The American imperialists talk about the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination: in fact, they only want to impose on them a puppet regime in the U.S. imperialists' pay.

The White House talks about the Vietnamese people's free decision on the reunification of Vietnam. How can this reunification be brought about when a pro-American puppet government is maintained in South Vietnam with the bayonets of an American expeditionary corps? In spite of all their protestations of good will, the American imperialists can never hide their intention of perpetuating the division of Vietnam.

The White House drops a hint that the United States would accept the stand of the DRV government, except its third point. This third point says: The affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by its own people, according to the political program of the NFISV--South Vietnam National Front for Liberation--without any foreign interference.

The NFISV, the only authentic representative of the South Vietnamese people, controls at present four-fifths of the territory, inhabited by 10 million people. Its program aims at realizing independence, democracy, peace and neutrality in South Vietnam and the eventual peaceful reunification in Vietnam. It envisages the setting up of a democratic government of broad national union. If it is true that the U.S. Government respects the Vietnamese people's right to self-determination, how can it justify its refusal to accept that third point? This refusal means simply the negation of all other demagogic promises of the White House. At bottom, the American imperialists stubbornly refuse to recognize the four-point stand of the DRV government. Their own position remains unchanged: to cling to South Vietnam, to maintain their troops there and the Saigon puppet administration, to turn South Vietnam into a U.S. military base and new-type colony, and to perpetuate the division of Vietnam.

In Fact a Smokescreen:

Armed aggression in South Vietnam, aerial warfare against the DRV, heinous crimes committed against the South Vietnamese people--all this has aroused universal indignation against the American imperialists. On the other hand, the just stand of the DRV government and that of the NFISV receive the full approval of the whole of progressive mankind.

The noisy peace campaign and the 14 points put forward by the White House, however skillfully concerted, nevertheless betray the American imperialists' intention of deceiving American and world opinion, forcing on the Vietnamese people acceptance of their conditions, while actively preparing for the intensification and expansion of the aggressive war in Vietnam.

In the first three weeks along of January 1966, the American imperialists sent 12,000 men to South Vietnam, bringing the number of their troops to more than 200,000. Numerous sources have revealed their planned increase to 400,000. Massive means of extermination are being used on a growing scale in South Vietnam, resulting in abominable crimes.

Air reconnaissance is being continued with a view to renewed bombings in the DRV. Several American generals have talked about bombing raids to be conducted on the populated industrial areas of Hanoi and Haiphong, and other criminal schemes.

The American imperialists have not only intensified their aerial bombings in Laos and multiplied armed provocations against Cambodia. They even talk about pursuing the Viet Cong into Laotian and Cambodian territory, which means extending their aggressive war to the whole of Indochina.

The American imperialists said that they have put everything in the basket of peace. They have indeed, except peace. Let them nurture no illusion about the effectiveness of their threats and lies. As the spokesman of the DRV Foreign Ministry stated on 4 January 1966: The Vietnamese people eagerly want peace for national construction, but they know full well that real independence must be achieved if genuine peace is to be secured.

A political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be envisaged only when the U.S. Government has accepted the four-point stand of the DRV government, has proved this by actual deeds, and has stopped unconditionally and for good its air raids and all other acts of war against the DRV.

February 2, 1966

STATE 253 (to Amembassy RANGOON), S/Nodis, Immediate, Sent 2 Feb 66
8:44 P.M.

2. ...we wish to give some response and also to test whether Hanoi is still willing to talk after the resumption (which your man apparently did not know about and on which his communications might not have permitted a cancelling message to get through on Monday). Accordingly, you should send him a short note acknowledging his communication, saying it is under careful study in Washington, and that we expect to have a detailed response in a very few days.

3. . . .

RUSK (Drafted by W. P. Bundy)

February 3, 1966

STATE Memorandum for SecState from William P. Bundy, dated Feb. 3, 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

SUBJECT: DRV Approach in Rangoon on January 31

It seems to me that our response to this approach will take careful thought. As a first step, since Byroade's cables are hard to read together, I have done the attached pull-together, which contains the full text of the aide memoire, and also the points made in the oral conversation. I think this gives us a much better starting point, with numerical headings, for our own reply. (Tab A).

We may know much better, on the basis of Byroade's interim response, whether Hanoi really intended to start a dialogue after the resumption. In the meantime, the present facts appear to indicate that Hanoi may have sent the instructions prior to the resumption, but that it should have been possible to send a last-minute "recall" or "cancel" message if Hanoi had desired. Byroade reports that the DRV interpreter came to him to seek the appointment in the "early afternoon" of January 31, Rangoon time. (Rangoon time is 1 1/2 hours earlier than Saigon time.) This would suggest that the appointment was sought not earlier than 1500 Saigon time, whereas the first bombs had fallen at about 0900 Saigon time. The fact that the aide memoire was still being typed when Byroade arrived at 1930 Rangoon time would suggest that the instructions must have been freshly received and that there may even have been a preliminary instruction to seek an appointment, followed by the later transmission of the detailed instructions. By 1730 Rangoon time (1900 Saigon time) ten hours had elapsed after the resumption (which we assume was instantaneously reported to Hanoi). We believe that Hanoi's communications to Rangoon may go either by direct commercial cable or by relay through Peiping, using some cryptographic system that is presumably immune to Chicom reading. We are now checking whether NSA has any reading on message transmissions of that date, but what stands out is that it would surely have been possible for Hanoi to send a fast commercial cable that need not have said anything more than a short instruction not to carry out prior instructions. In other words, the evidence does add up to a high probability that Hanoi was prepared to go through with the contact notwithstanding the resumption. Indeed, there appears to be a substantial possibility on the timing, that Hanoi even waited till it knew of the resumption before it dispatched the instructions. Paradoxical as it may seem, Hanoi may have been unwilling to open any dialogue during the suspension, lest this appear as a sign of weakness, and fear of our bombing.

A second collateral aspect worthy of note is that Hanoi broadcast, on the evening of February 1, Saigon time, in English, a lengthy article, the so-called "Quang Loi" article, which is by far the most detailed exposition of Hanoi's reaction to the Fourteen Points. For the first time, the actual text of the Fourteen Points was published, and the article goes on to explore their meaning, with a fair amount of invective, but in general in a far more moderate and reasoned tone than the overwhelming bulk of its output during the suspension. It seems to me essential that the aide memoire received in Rangoon be read in conjunction with the Quang Loi article, which I have therefore attached as Tab B.

Thirdly, the aide memoire itself refers to the DRV Foreign Ministry statement of January 4, and in effect incorporates this by reference. The January 4 statement, attached as Tab C, is a fairly straightforward reiteration of the Four Points, with no reference to our Fourteen Points except in highly general terms.

Because of the length of the two related Hanoi statements in Tabs B and C, I have sidelined key passages.

/s/ WPB
WILLIAM P. BUNDY

3 Encl

- 1 - Tab A - Bundy Summary
- 2 - Tab B - Quang Loi Article
- 3 - Tab C - January 4 Hanoi Statement

THE RANGOON APPROACH OF JANUARY 31
(From Rangoon 392-296)

Text of Aide Memoire (See cables cited)
(Para Numbers Added)

Points Made in Conversation (Para Numbers Added)

8. After the reading of the aide memoire, the DRV man asked if Byroade had anything to say. Byroade reverted to the earlier Rangoon aide memoire questioning the President's sincerity, and said that it was expecting too much that the President should be expected to be "sincere" in meeting "their" terms. Hanoi had its Four Points which were called "conditions." We had Fourteen Points which expressed what we believe. Was it not possible that responsible emissaries of our two governments could meet and talk about all of these things together? All we asked was for unconditional talks or talks based upon the Geneva Agreements.

9. The DRV man was at first confused and thought Byroade had said something new. However, on clarification, his answer was quite clear and definite. He said there was no possibility for negotiations unless we accepted their Four Points. He said their position was the embodiment of the minimum of their national rights. If we proved our acceptance of the Geneva Agreements by actual deeds there could be a basis for a political settlement. If we rejected the Geneva Agreements, which embody these rights, there could be no repeat no negotiations. What was needed from our side was the acceptance of these points by actual deeds.

10. There was then a non-conclusive discussion as to who had violated the Geneva Accords. In the course of this discussion, the DRV man asserted that, when the Geneva Agreements had been drawn up, the US had agreed that it would not use force to protect them. (Byroade's 396 thinks that this statement, in its context, conveyed an implication that the DRV had thought that, in attacking South Vietnam, it would be secure against US military action -- that, in short, the DRV had been misled. The facts on this point are that Bedell Smith said that we would not ourselves use force to disturb the Agreements, but went on to say that we would view the use of force by others with grave concern. In other words, the statements by the DRV man distort the record substantially.)

11. Then, in response to the DRV man's asking whether Byroade had anything else to say, Byroade reverted to the question of sincerity and raised the question as to just who was sincere and who was not, when Hanoi kept repeating, as late as January 30, that there were no North Vietnamese regular troops or troop units in the South. Byroade pointed out that almost no one believed this and that there were plenty of prisoners to disprove it. Yet these statements continued. The DRV man took note of these remarks and said he would communicate them, but did not comment otherwise.

12. In conclusion, Byroade said that he saw nothing new in the positions the DRV man had given him, but was glad to talk with him in any event. He added "He (the DRV man) said if we were not careful we could get into endless quarrels. I said that there would never be anything personal about our differences of opinion and we should keep it that way so that sometime we both could be useful to our governments. He said he would communicate at any time whatever, I had to say. He showed me on the way out a back gate to his house which would be much better to use as an entrance from a security point of view."

13. Byroade's closing comment was as follows: "While the above doesn't sound like it, this was our most friendly meeting to date. Vu was very cordial and hospitable and seemed in a relaxed mood. If he knew of news reports that bombing had been resumed he gave no indications of it."

RANGOON 398 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Priority, Sent 3 Feb 66; Rec'd 3 Feb 66, 5:44 A.M.

Ref: DepTel 253

We have arranged to deliver the following memorandum ...

Text follows "I refer to our last discussion on January 31, 1966, in which you presented me with an aide-memoire which in turn enclosed a statement made by a spokesman of the foreign ministry of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam dated January 4, 1966.

I wish to inform you that these matters are under careful study in Washington, and that I think I may have a detailed response for you in a few days time."

BYROADE

February 7, 1966

RANGOON 406 (to Sec State), S/Nodis, Priority, Rec'd 7 Feb 1966, 10:42 P.M.
(Passed to White House 8 Feb 66, 12:30 A.M.)

English language papers this morning frontpaged AP and UPI stories, quoting "Administration" and "informed" sources, of direct contact made by me here with DRV on Dec. 29. No mention of continuing contacts.

I have told RGUB and have passed word to Vu that I will not rpt not confirm, but will stand on no rpt no comment.

BYROADE

February 8, 1966

RANGOON 411 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Priority, Rec'd 8 Feb 66, 6:03 A.M.,
(Passed White House 8 Feb 66)

1. GVN Consul General Duc requested appointment see me today. Responding to his expected questions re contact in Rangoon between Ambassador Byroade and DRV ConGen as reported in wire services, I took line previously agreed on with Ambassador Byroade that all embassies had strict instructions not to comment on any channels of communication with North Vietnam; that Ambassador Byroade had had similar inquiries put to him before departing for Bangkok and was not commenting. Moreover, I was in no position to speculate about contacts.

2. Duc unaggressive and did not press further.

RAMARD

February 16, 1966

STATE 267 (to Anembassy RANGOON), S/Nodis, Priority, Sent 16 Feb 68,
11:38 A.M.

You should seek appointment with DRV Consul General to deliver following aide-memoire:

BEGIN TEXT:

1. The USG has taken note of the Aide Memoire delivered to the American Ambassador in Rangoon on January 31, 1966.

2. The USG fully respects the basic rights of the Vietnamese people to peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, as set forth in the Geneva Accords of 1954. As the USG has repeatedly said, it believes that these Accords, together with the 1962 Accords concerning Laos, are an adequate basis for peace in Southeast Asia or for negotiations looking toward a peaceful settlement.

3. The USG has repeatedly stated and hereby reaffirms that it is prepared to withdraw its forces from South Viet-Nam when peace is restored. The US has never stated that it must be the sole judge of when this condition exists. Plainly, the restoration of peace requires the adherence of all concerned to the essential provisions of the Geneva Accords dealing with the regroupment of opposing forces to their respective areas, and dealing with the obligations that the two zones shall not be utilized for the resumption of hostilities or in the service of an aggressive policy. It is the view of the USG that the DRV, in introducing armed forces, military equipment, and political cadres into South Viet-Nam, has breached the provisions of the Accords, and has thus made necessary the actions undertaken by the USG in support of the legitimate right of the Republic of Viet-Nam to self-defense. The withdrawal of US forces would be undertaken in the light of the actions taken by the DRV in this regard, and would necessarily be subject also the existence of adequate measures of verification.

The USG seeks no military bases of any kind in South Viet-Nam and has no desire whatever to retain its forces in South Viet-Nam after peace is secured:

4. With respect to the third of the DRV's four points, the US takes note that Chairman Ho Chi Minh in his letter of January 29 described the program of the NLF as seeking "to achieve independence, democracy, peace and neutrality in South Viet-Nam and to advance toward peaceful reunification." If this is all that is intended

when it is stated that the affairs of the South Vietnamese be settled "in accordance with the program of the NLF," the third point would not be an obstacle to negotiations.

However, it appears that in referring to the program of the NLF the DRV may contemplate that the NLF arbitrarily be accorded integral participation in a coalition government or be accepted as the "sole genuine representative of the entire South Vietnamese people" prior to, and without regard to, an election. If this is what is meant by the third point, we would consider it in contradiction of the very objectives specified above, and quite without warrant in the Geneva Accords of 1954.

It remains the essence of the USG view that the future political structure in South Viet-Nam should be determined by the South Vietnamese people themselves through truly free elections. The USG is categorically prepared to accept the results of elections held in an atmosphere free from force, intimidation or outside interference.

5. In the light of the foregoing and to make clear our understanding of a possible basis for discussions leading to a peaceful settlement, we submit for consideration of the DRV the following:

Point I - The basic rights of the Vietnamese people to peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity are recognized as set forth in the Geneva Accords of 1954. Obtaining compliance with the essential principles in the Accords is an appropriate subject for immediate, international discussions, or negotiations without preconditions. Such discussions or negotiations should consider, among other things, appropriate means, including agreed stages, for the withdrawal of military and quasi-military personnel and weapons introduced into South Viet-Nam or North Viet-Nam from one area to the other or into either area from any other outside source; the dismantling of any military bases in either areas, and the cancellation of any military alliances, that may contravene the Accords; and the regrouping and redeployment of indigenous forces.

Point II - Strict compliance with the military provisions of the Geneva Accords must be achieved in accordance with schedules and appropriate safeguards to be agreed upon in the said discussions or negotiations.

Point III - The internal affairs of South and North Viet-Nam must be settled respectively by the South and North Vietnamese peoples themselves in conformity with the principles of self-determination. Neither shall interfere in the affairs of the other nor shall there be any interference from any outside source.

Point IV - The issue of reunification of Viet-Nam must be decided peacefully, on the basis of free determination by the peoples of South and North Viet-Nam without outside interference. END TEXT

6. In delivering text, you should take care not to go beyond its terms in providing explanation to any questions asked. Naturally, we would be most interested in any comments he may care to make then or at future date.

7. FYI: Bundy will bring to Baguio some additional material for your background in case of future contacts. However, for time being, we do not wish to be drawn into extended oral discussion which might be misunderstood. END FYI.

8. In arranging appointment, you should avoid any impression of undue urgency.

February 19, 1966

RANGOON 433 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Priority, Rec'd 19 Feb 1966, 11:33 A.M.

DRV Rep Vu received me at 7:00 P.M. . . .

Vu did not try to read document in English but listened attentively as his interpreter translated document for him.

...
Vu said he would transmit our Aide-Memoire to his government. He said that if I had anything else to add that I should go ahead with it. I said that my instructions had been covered fully by the document now in his hands and that I had nothing more for the present. Vu then said that since our last meeting there had been many developments in the situation. He said that their stand on the grounds for agreement must be based on the fact that the US has resumed the bombing. He said this was a gross violation of the sovereignty and national independence of a state. American forces had been intensifying the war and following a policy of kill all, burn all, destroy all. Also there was the fact of the joint declaration of the USG and the South Vietnamese authorities. He said the points made therein only served the cause of the American war.

He then said "I also wish to avail myself of the occasion of this meeting to inform you something else today. Since the US has resumed the bombing, I hold that it is inappropriate to continue our contacts."

...I said I wanted to be very sure I had understood correctly his statement about future contacts between us, and asked if he could amplify his remarks. He repeated verbatim his previous words except that this time he used the expression "It is inappropriate to continue

our talks at your request." He said he thought he had expressed himself clearly. He would however follow up by sending me an Aide-Memoire, as he had been speaking under instructions.

BYROADE

February 21, 1966

RANGOON 436 (to SecState), S/Nodis, Immediate, Rec'd 21 Feb 66, 2:01 PM

Ref: EMBTEL 433

The following aide-memoire dated Feb 19 from DRV representative Yu addressed to me was hand delivered to the Embassy this evening. Quote: At this meeting held at your request, I find it necessary to make the following statements:

The resumption of the bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the increase of American armed forces and of war aid to the South Vietnam authorities, rigged up by the United States, on order of the United States Government and the issue of a joint declaration at the Honolulu Conference by the United States and the South Vietnam authorities have exposed the true colour of the "Peace Efforts" Manoeuvred by the American government. The American government is doing its utmost to intensify and expend its aggressive war in Vietnam and Indochinese countries, bringing it to a new stage, seriously endangering peace and security of the countries in this region. The American government must bear full responsibility for the consequences resulted in by the aggressive war it wages. The bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, an independent and sovereign country, ordered by the United States Government constitutes an unpardonable aggressive act. In so doing, the American Government not only grossly violates and tramples under foot the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam which it solemnly undertakes to respect but also brazenly breaches the United Nations Charter and the most elementary norms of justice and human rights.

Conducting the destructive war in South Vietnam with every kind of American, most modern weapons including those strictly prohibited by International Law as noxious chemicals and gas, the American Expeditionary Troops and the mercenary troops have been carrying out wherever they go the scorched earth policy killing all, burning all and destroying all. If the United States Government thinks that its utmost barbarous and cruel aggressive policy as such can subjugate the Vietnamese people, that will be a great mistake and here day-dream.

The Honolulu Conference and the Joint Declaration signed at that conference by the United States and South Vietnam puppet authorities represent the entire scheme of the United States to bring the aggressive war in South Vietnam to a new stage. Therefore, such hypocritical terms of the said declaration "opposition to aggression," "fulfilment of commitments," "continuation of peace efforts," "self-determination", "rural reconstruction program," etc. are in essence aimed at covering up the designs of the aggressive war in South Vietnam.

Faced with the strength of unbreakable unity and determination to fight and to win of the Vietnamese people who enjoy the strong sympathy and support of the world people including the American people, the efforts made so far or to be made in the future by the American Government cannot remove the more and more critical situation of the American troops and the mercenary troops who are now falling into a quagmire in South Vietnam but will only bring them instead even bigger and more ignominious setbacks and eventually total defeat. It is the Vietnamese people who decide the outcome of the war they wage against the American invaders. They have won and will triumph. Such is the truth that has been realized and admitted by the majority of the American people and a number of persons among the American political circle but denied by the United States Government.

If the United States Government really wants to settle the Vietnam question peacefully, it should accept the four-point stand of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and prove its acceptance by actual deeds and stop for good and unconditionally its bombing of North Vietnam and all other war acts against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Only so can a political settlement of the Vietnam question be envisaged.

As the United States Government has ordered the resumption of bombing raids on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, I consider it inappropriate to continue the contacts made at your request between you and myself. Unquote.

BYROADE

